

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the very thorough consideration given the present application.

Claims 1 and 3-21 are now present in this application. Claim 2 has been canceled, and claims 1, 3, 4, 6-9 and 11-13 have been amended by the present amendment. Claim 1 is independent.

Amendments have been made to the specification. No new matter is involved.

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Priority Under 35 U.S.C. § 119

Applicants thank the Examiner for acknowledging Applicants' claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119, and receipt of the certified priority documents.

Information Disclosure Citation

Applicants thank the Examiner for considering all but one of the references supplied with the Information Disclosure Statements filed on August 27, 2004 and July 14, 2005, and for providing Applicants with an initialed copy of the Forms PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08 filed therewith.

The Examiner has not initialed next to EP 1036874 cited on the Form PTO-1449 filed on August 27, 2004 because an English language translation has not been furnished therewith. Actually, Applicants filed an English language Search Report listing EP 1036874, where the Search Report listed this reference as an "A" category reference. MPEP §609.04(a), III, the

paragraph bridging pages 600-153 and 600-154, Rev. 3, August 2006, indicates that this satisfies the requirement of a concise explanation of the relevance of this non-English language reference.

Accordingly, the Examiner should have initialed the citation of this reference on the Form PTO-1449.

Nevertheless, in an attempt to expedite consideration of this reference by the Office, Applicants have downloaded an English language Abstract of EP 1036874 through the EPO Internet website and attached it hereto. Applicants have also downloaded the written description of this patent document in French and a computer generated translation of that written description from the Google Internet website, the accuracy of which is not guaranteed by Applicants, and attach those documents, as well, to assist the Examiner in considering this reference.

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider this reference and provide Applicants with an initialed copy of the Form PTO-1449, which lists EP 1036874, in the next Office Action.

Specification Objection

The Examiner has objected to the specification because of several informalities, and has asked Applicants to review the specification for similar errors. In order to overcome this objection, Applicants have reviewed the specification, have identified a number of similar informalities, and have amended the specification in order to correct the deficiencies pointed out by the Examiner and the other deficiencies found by Applicants during the aforementioned review.

Applicants believe that the corrections are self-explanatory, except for the deletion of numeral 72 in the paragraph beginning on line 7 of page 2. This deletion was made to make that portion of the specification, which describes the conventional art shown in Figs. 1 and 2, consistent with Figs. 1 and 2, neither of which contains numeral 72.

Numeral 72 is shown, for example, in Fig. 4, which shows an exemplary embodiment of the invention, and numeral 72 is correctly described with respect to Fig. 4, in line 23 on page 7 of the specification.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection are respectfully requested.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication 2002/0121484 to Arai et al. ("Arai"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

A complete discussion of the Examiner's rejection is set forth in the Office Action, and is not being repeated here.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter as recited in independent claim 2. For example, independent claim 1 now recites that the plasma discharge unit includes an inflow passage connected to the outer tub for introducing washing water inside the outer tub, a discharge box for receiving washing water introduced through the inflow passage and having a space where a plasma discharge is performed, an electrode disposed at the discharge box, and a high voltage generator electrically connected to the electrode for applying a voltage to the electrode.

These features are supported at least by Figure 5 and the corresponding description in the specification. For example, Figure 5 illustrates the plasma discharge unit 120 including an inflow passage 122 connected to an outer tube for introducing washing water inside the outer tub 60, a discharge box 124 for receiving washing water introduced through the inflow passage 122, and having a space where a plasma discharge is performed, an electrode 126 disposed at the discharge box 124, and a high-voltage generator 128 electrically connected to the electrode 126 for applying a voltage to the electrode.

On the contrary, Arai does not teach or suggest such a claimed plasma discharge unit including an inflow passage, a discharge box, an electrode and a high-voltage generator. That is, none of the elements in Arai et al. are capable of performing a plasma discharge.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted independent claim 1 and the claims depending therefrom are allowable.

Claims 2-9, 11-14 and 16-21 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Arai.

Further, it is respectfully submitted this rejection has also been overcome as the claims rejected are dependent claims. It is respectfully requested this rejection also be withdrawn.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection of claims 2-9, 11-14 and 16-21 are respectfully requested.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 2-9, 11-14 and 16-21 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) stand rejected under 35

U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Arai in view of U.S. Patent 3,518,174 to Inoue. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Similarly, it is respectfully submitted this rejection has also been overcome as the claims rejected therein are dependent claims, and the additional reference by Inoue also does not teach or suggest the claimed plasma discharge unit. That is, none of the components in Inoue are capable of performing a plasma discharge as claimed by the present invention.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection of claims 2-9, 11-14 and 16-21 are respectfully requested.

Claims 10 and 15 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Arai in view of Inoue and further in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication 2006/0060218 to Lakdawala et al. ("Lakdawala"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Further, it is respectfully submitted this rejection has also been overcome as the claims rejected therein are dependent claims and Lakdawala et al. also does not teach or suggest the features of the independent claims.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection of claims 10 and 15 are respectfully requested.

Additional Cited References

Because the remaining references cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but have merely been cited to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

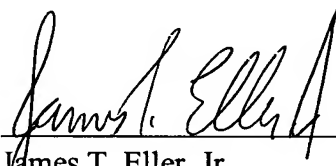
If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone Robert J. Webster, Registration No. 46, 472, at (703) 205-8000, in the Washington, D.C. area.

– If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Dated: May 17, 2007

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment: English language Abstract of EP 1036874
Written description of EP 1036874 in French and English Translation thereof